

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 IO-13 /084 W
-----221147Z 037589 /21

R 221119Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6688
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY
AMEMBASSY SUVA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 05010

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EAID, XP, TH, GW
SUBJECT: FRG INTEREST IN SOUTH PACIFIC

REFS: (A) BONN 4062; (B) WELLINGTON 970

SUMMARY: FRG IS BECOMING MORE INVOLVED IN SOUTH PACIFIC IN RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FROM STATES IN THE AREA FOR ASSISTANCE. AUSTRALIA'S AND NEW ZEALAND'S DESIRE FOR A EUROPEAN PRESENCE IN THE AREA IS LEADING TO A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FRG. THE SOVIET INTEREST IN WESTERN SOMOA AND TONGA PLAYS A ROLE IN THE FRG'S INTEREST. GERMAN AID TOTALS ARE NOT DEFINITELY SET, BUT ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN MODEST. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DIRECTOR OF FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS IN THE FONOFF (HELLBECK) HAS GIVEN US A COMPREHENSIVE BRIEFING ON
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THE BACKGROUND OF THE INCREASING GERMAN INTEREST IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

2. ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO THE FRG RECEIVED A SERIES OF FEELERS FROM THE SOUTH PACIFIC STATES SEEKING CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE FRG. AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND WERE BOTH FEELING FRUSTRATED AND INCREASINGLY SKEPTICAL OF

THE U.K.'S ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE AREA. THEY WERE LOOKING FOR SOME OTHER NATION TO FILL THE GAP. THE U.S. WAS RULED OUT FOR THIS ROLE BY THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT. OF THE EUROPEAN NATIONS, THE FRG HAS THE RESOURCES TO DO THE JOB.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT ISLAND STATES WERE FEELING POLITICAL PRESSURE FROM BOTH THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE AND ECONOMIC PRESSURE FROM THE WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS. THEY ALSO WELCOMED CLOSER TIES TO THE FRG.

4. THE FRG'S REACTION TO THESE EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST WAS A DECISION TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THE AREA THROUGH OFFERS OF SUPPORT, COUNSEL AND MONEY. THE GERMANS FIRST CONSULTED WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND ON THE AREA'S NEEDS FOR AID. THEY THEN ENCOURAGED THE U.K. TO DO WHAT IT COULD. THE RESULTS:

-- ADVOCACY WITHIN THE EC OF LIBERAL TREATMENT OF NEW ZEALAND, WHICH HAS BEEN MUCH HARDER HIT BY THE WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS THAN AUSTRALIA HAS. SPECIFICALLY, THE FRG HAS RECOGNIZED NEW ZEALAND'S DEPENDENCY ON AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS AND WILL SUPPORT EXTENSION OF EC PREFERENCES FOR BUTTER, CHEESE AND MILK POWDER BEYOND 1980. WHILE THERE IS NOT A LARGE MARKET FOR LAMB IN THE FRG, THE GERMANS ARE SYMPATHETIC TOWARDS INCREASED IMPORTS BY THE EC.
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THE FRG WILL BE FORTHCOMING TOWARD PM MULDOON DURING HIS VISIT TO BONN.

-- ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH PAPUA NEW GUINEA, VISITS TO THE FRG BY THE HEAD OF STATE OF WESTERN SAMOA, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TUITA OF TONGA, AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA (BONN 17976 - 76; 14575 - 76; 14574 - 76) -- VISITS MARKED BY THE ABILITY OF THE ISLANDERS TO RUN UP BIG BILLS WHICH THE FRG PAID, AND THE CONCLUSION OF A TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH TONGA.

-- A DEVELOPING MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH AUSTRALIA, INCLUDING CONSULTATIONS, PURCHASE BY AUSTRALIA OF THE LEOPARD TANK AND, PROSPECTIVELY, GERMAN TORPEDO BOATS.

5. THE FRG THEN HELD CONSULTATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE U.K. ABOUT AID NEEDS OF THE ISLANDS.

IT ASKED NEW ZEALAND TO HEAD DISCUSSIONS OF THIS SUBJECT
IN WELLINGTON. THE FRG BELIEVES IT IS ESSENTIAL TO HAR-

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SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 IO-13 /084 W
-----221148Z 037612 /21

R 221119Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6689
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MONIZE AID PROGRAMS BECAUSE THE ISLANDERS TRY TO PLAY
ONE DONOR OFF AGAINST ANOTHER, OVER EMPHASIZE THE SOVIET
INTEREST IN THE AREA, AND ARE OVERLY INTERESTED IN
PRESTIGE PROJECTS. FONOFF DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
GERHARD FISCHER VISITED THE ISLANDS IN DECEMBER AND A
TEAM FROM THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION MINISTRY IS FINISHING
UP ITS SURVEY OF THE ISLANDS' NEEDS (BONN 4062;
WELLINGTON 970). THE FRG SET ASIDE A TOTAL OF 10
MILLION DM IN THIS YEAR'S AID BUDGET FOR THE REGION IN
ORDER TO CREATE A GOOD ATMOSPHERE AND SIGNAL ITS
WILLINGNESS TO EXTEND AID. HOWEVER, THE FONOFF HAS REAL
DOUBTS ABOUT THE ABILITY OF THE AREA TO ABSORB AID AND
HAS NO INTEREST IN PRESTIGE PROJECTS. THE ONLY EXCEP-
TION IS THE TONGA AIRPORT, WHERE THERE SEEMS TO BE A
CONSENSUS DEVELOPING THAT THE RUNWAY SHOULD BE
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EXTENDED (HOW MUCH IS NOT YET DETERMINED) AND HARDENED AND LIGHTS SHOULD BE INSTALLED, WHICH NEW ZEALAND HAS AGREED TO DO. THE FRG IS READY IN PRINCIPLE TO CONTRIBUTE, BUT WILL MAKE FINAL DECISIONS ONLY ONCE A FEASIBILITY STUDY BY AN AUSTRALIAN COMPANY IS COMPLETED IN APRIL (ONE DONE PREVIOUSLY FOR THE UNDP BY A JAPANESE COMPANY IS IGNORED BY THE FRG BECAUSE OF ITS POOR QUALITY). THE FRG BELIEVES THAT TONGA HAS LITTLE OR NO TOURIST POTENTIAL (NO HOTELS, POOR FOOD, NOT EVEN NATIVE DANCERS) AND THAT THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF THE AIR-PORT IS QUESTIONABLE.

6. AS FOR SOVIET ASPIRATIONS IN THE ISLANDS: THE FRG SEES THE U.S. AS RELATIVELY RELAXED, AUSTRALIA AS A BIT MORE ALARMED, AND NEW ZEALAND AS THE MOST WORRIED. THE FRG BELIEVES THAT THE SOVIETS WANT LANDING RIGHTS FOR AEROFLOT AND FISHING RIGHTS OFF WESTERN SAMOA. THERE IS A REMOTE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY WANT SOME MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, BUT, IN VIEW OF THE LONG SUPPLY LINES INVOLVED, THEY WOULD BE OF LIMITED VALUE. THE ISLANDS COULD, HOWEVER, BE A USEFUL STAGING AREA FOR LATIN AMERICA OR ANTARTICA. A MORE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IS THE FRAGILE NATURE OF THE ISLANDS' SOCIAL STRUCTURE. COMMUNIST AGENTS COULD VERY WELL FOMENT REVOLUTIONS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PEOPLES' DEMOCRACIES. THE FONOFF BELIEVES A MODEST INVESTMENT CAN FORESTALL THIS DEVELOPMENT AND IS, THEREFORE, WORTHWHILE.

7. HELLBECK STRESSED TO US THE FRG'S DESIRE TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH US. HE HAS SENT BACKGROUND BRIEFING PAPERS TO THE FRG EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON AND WILL SHORTLY SEND FURTHER GUIDANCE SO THAT THE DEPARTMENT CAN BE KEPT UP FULLY ON FRG PLANS. HELLBECK ALSO STRESSED THAT THE FRG HAS NO AMBITIONS TO PLAY AN INDEPENDENT
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ROLE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

8. DURING THIS CONVERSATION, HELLBECK REFERRED TO A RECOMMENDATION RECEIVED FROM THE FRG CHARGE IN WELLINGTON (WELLINGTON 883). HE SAID HE HAD PERSONALLY MADE SURE THAT THE RECOMMENDATIONS, WHICH HELLBECK REGARDED AS MOST UNREALISTIC, WOULD BE IGNORED. HE

ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE FRG ENCOURAGED ITS EMBASSY IN WELLINGTON TO DISCUSS ITS IDEAS OPENLY WITH THE U.S. EMBASSY. HOWEVER, IF SCHMITZ DISCUSSES HIS IDEAS WITH US, HELLBECK ASKED THAT WE DISREGARD THEM. IN NO WAY DO THEY REPRESENT OFFICIAL GERMAN VIEWS.

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-----221150Z 037607 /21

R 221119Z MAR 77
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9. COMMENT: IT APPEARS AS IF IT WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE FRG IN THIS MATTER. THE FRG WANTS TO WORK WITH US, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT WAS SHARPLY CRITICIZED LAST YEAR BY THE SOVIETS FOR TRYING TO RE-ESTABLISH OLD GERMAN COLONIAL TIES TO THE AREA. WE DO NOT EXPECT THE GERMAN AID PROGRAM TO BE LARGE, BUT THE FRG HAS THE MEANS AND WILL TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ISLANDS' DEVELOPMENT.

10. HELLBECK'S EXPLANATION OF FRG INTEREST IS ONE OF THE CLEAREST EXAMPLES WE HAVE SEEN OF THE OFTEN-MENTIONED INCREASED INTEREST OF THE FRG IN THE THIRD

WORLD. THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS RELATED BY HELLBECK IS A
COGENT EXAMPLE OF HOW THE EXISTENCE OF THE FRG'S
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RESOURCES, COUPLED WITH A FEELING OF GREATER ASSERTIVE-
NESS AND CAPABILITY, RESULTS IN A DECISION TO BECOME
MORE INVOLVED IN A REMOTE AREA OF THE WORLD WHICH, UP TO
NOW, THE FRG HAS LARGELY IGNORED. THE SOUTH PACIFIC
ISLANDS ARE NOT CENTRAL TO GERMAN INTERESTS. HELLBECK,
AS THE OFFICIAL WHO WORKS MOST CLOSELY ON THEM, MAY
EXAGGERATE THEIR ROLE IN GERMAN POLICY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BONN05010
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770097-1011
Format: TEL
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770337/aaaabfli.tel
Line Count: 294
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c7fa34b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BONN 4062, 77 WELLINGTON 970
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3040241
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRG INTEREST IN SOUTH PACIFIC
TAGS: PFOR, EAID, XP, TH, GE, AS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c7fa34b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009